Conservation of fishery resources : rebuilding stocks of cod and hake in Community and adjacent waters

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The committee adopted the report by Ian HUDGHTON (Greens/EFA, UK) on the Commission communication. While acknowledging the need to replenish stocks, the report stressed that the measures must be based on properly funded independent scientific advice. Research was needed into the various factors (including those external to fisheries) which may have contributed to the dramatic decline in cod and hake stocks. The committee said that technical measures should be targeted according to the species and the geographical area in question. Moreover, all interested parties should be involved in the planning and decision-making process when drawing up the long-term recovery plans. There was a need for flexibility and balance, given the extraordinary sacrifices which some of the proposals would entail for the fleets affected. Decommissioning should be considered only as a last resort and there should be increased aid for voluntary withdrawal from fishing activities. In addition, the committee called for the measures to be applied more slowly but over a longer period of time (7 instead of 5 years) and wanted to see more socio-economic measures to support the sector. The report also drew attention to the difficulties which fishermen experienced as a result of increased mesh sizes, although it acknowledged that scientific evidence showed that mesh sizes needed to be at least 100mm in order to prevent catches of juvenile hake and cod. It stressed that industrial fisheries, which included huge by-catches of juvenile fish, must be gradually phased out. Lastly, it called for multiannual TACs and quotas to be put forward as soon as practicable for long-term planning.